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THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY AT OXFORD.

By AN OXFORD GRADUATE.

Oxford, Englnad.

The invitation to give the readers of the "OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT STUDENT" some idea of the present condition of theological studies in the great English Universities could not as regards Oxford at least have come at a more opportune moment. For not only has there recently appeared in the July number of the *Contemporary Review** a description of the peculiar genius and attitude of English theology as represented by the universities, accompanied by some account of present theological activity at Oxford, from the pen of one who has been himself foremost in awakening and quickening sober and reverent theological research after the type of his own; but only a few weeks previously considerable modifications, implying much more in spirit than the letter of them would at first seem to betoken, had been announced in the *University Gazette* as destined to come into force during the next academic year.

Before giving a brief account of these, some effort must be made to put before my readers the character of the existing Course or a School of Theology.

This is of comparatively recent origin, as a distinct branch of academic instruction, being scarce twenty years old. It was framed under dominant Anglican or High church influence, the hand of Dr. Pusey being a chief moulding factor. Consequently its genius was historical, in the sense in which the history of the Past is made to dominate the Present, rather than to supply data of experience to the Present, to receive a fresh life and new forms of expression at its hand. The Patristic age was made normal as the interpreter of the apostolic age; the work of Theology consisted rather in collecting and codifying its general drift or consensus, (so far as it may

* "The Present State of English Theology" by Professor Sanday. *Cont. Review*, July 1889.

be said to have a consensus) than in taking it as but the first and rudimentary stage in the church's realization of original Christianity,—that of Christ and His apostles, and then as but part of our data for a fresh and relatively independent interpretation or construction of that Christianity. But this latter view was even at that time not altogether unrepresented, and being as it was, in harmony with the general conception of historical study it grew with this wider growth, until now it has gained at least partial recognition for itself in the revised Statutes of the Board of the Faculty of Theology published at the end of last term. It is this which gives significance to the changes even where slight in themselves, seeing that they represent that historical method, which making us “richer in historical points of view”, makes us thereby more sympathetic and less absolute in our judgments of the past, and so promises to be the true Eirenicon of the future by showing the points which divide the Christian Churches to be largely the outcome of particular circumstances (of place, time or civilization) and therefore not of such abiding moment as to mar unity of spirit and coöperation on the basis of the underlying agreement of Christian hearts.

The Oxford School of Theology recognizes the following subjects:

- (1) The Holy Scriptures.
- (2) Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology.
- (3) Ecclesiastical History and the Fathers.
- (4) The Evidences of Religion.
- (5) Liturgies.
- (6) Sacred criticism and the Archæology of the Old and New Testaments.

Of these (1) is fundamental and together with one other of the subjects enumerated, forms the minimum which may be offered; but for a “first class” it and three other subjects (one of them (2)) are necessary. Within these limits the student is left to make his choice under the direction of his College-Tutor. The books prescribed in each subject are liable to vary a little from year to year, but there is always a fixed element and that the larger one which remains perma-

nent like a backbone. Finally there are in addition to the books prescribed, also lists of books in each case, suggested by way of supplement or for reference.

Under (1) come:

O. T. The subject matter of Isaiah together with historical books like Samuel and Kings.

N. T. St. John's Gospel with one of the Synoptic Gospels; (in the Greek) the Epistle to the Romans or the Acts (detailed study); general knowledge of the Pauline Epistles.

Optional (i) Hebrew (1) elementary; Book of Genesis. (2) advanced; e. g. Psalms 1-50; Isaiah 40-66; Ezekiel 1-16.

(ii) Septuagint. Genesis; Pss. 1-50; Isa. 40-66; Ezekiel 1-16.

In this section the significant modification recently made is the requirement of outlines of the *Theology* as well as of the History of the O. and N. T., certain sections in Oehler's "Theology of the O. T." being specially recommended; thus Biblical Theology is securing a place for itself side by side with Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology, a fact rich in promise for the purification and revivifying of the latter.

In this connection mention may naturally be made of Professor Cheyne's two courses of Lectures, viz., "Old Testament Theology" (Late Period) and "Introduction to the later books of the O. T."

Professor Driver is lecturing on the books set in advanced Hebrew*, while next term he will begin on Job and also take in hand the subject-matter of Isaiah.

Under (2) there are three alternatives offered, viz., the Doctrines of (a) the Holy Trinity, (b) the Incarnation, (c) Grace, respectively.

It will be instructive to notice the texts prescribed as showing where stress was laid under the old system, which has only been very partially modified in the new.

(a) Athanasius (contra Arianos I. II. III.); Hippolytus (contra Hæresin Noeti); Pearson on the Creed I. II. VIII.

The New Statutes, while retaining the Athanasius, substitute for the others Dionysius Romanus, Epist. c. Sabellianos,

*In connection with this subject, it may interest some to know that Dr. Neubauer lectures on Talmudic and Rabbinic Hebrew, while Professor Margoliouth the new holder of the chair of Arabic dealt in his inaugural Lecture with the place of Ecclesiasticus in Hebrew Literature.

Augustine de Trinitate V.-VIII., the Quicunque Vult, and assume an acquaintance with the Scriptural grounds of the doctrine and with its history to the close of the period covered by the required texts. Among the books suggested for reference also appears for the first time Dorner's "System of Christian Doctrine," Vol. I., as well as Aquinas' Summa (Tractatus de Trinitate).

In (b) Athanasius de Incarnatione Verbi Dei; Cyril of Alexandria, (Epistolæ ad Nestorium, II. III., ep. ad Iren. Antioch.); Leo ep. XXVIII. ad Flavianum; Definitio fidei concil. Chalced; Hooker, bk. V. §50-57; Pearson on the Creed, III.-VII.

The new statutes omit the Pearson and add Anselm Cur Deus Homo and the Quicunque Vult; while among the suggested books now appear Aquinas Summa, Pars. III., qu. 1-6, Ritschl's Rechtfertigung and Bruce's Humiliation of Christ.

(c) Augustine (de spiritu et litera, de natura et gratia., de gestis Pelagii); Canons of 2nd Council of Orange; Pearson 8-10. Browne on XXXIX. Articles, Ats 9-18.

Here the changes are: addition of Basil de Spiritu Sancto, the Council of Trent, Decretum de peccato originali (Sess. V.), de Justificatione (Sess. VI.), Formula Concordiæ c. 1-4. Westminster Confession of Faith c. 3, 6, 9-18; omission of the Augustine except the de spiritu et litera; his de natura et gratia passing into the books of reference, among which Cyril of Jerusalem Catecheses XVI. XVII., Möhler (Symbolik) and Dorner now appear.

Here of course the extra-Anglican symbols are specially noteworthy additions, as making the course of study less denominational.

Under (3) great latitude of alternative is given, epochs from the Post-Apostolic to the Reformation Periods being open. Here the greatest improvement is in the last period, which instead of being divided into two parts at 1575, is now studied as a single whole (1500-1662), with considerable use of original documents.

Under (4) there are several alternatives, though to our great shame there is no University Professor either in the

Philosophy of Religion (Apologetics) or in the History of Religions, a want which Dr. Fairbairn is trying to do something to supply at Mansfield College.*

[For fuller information thereupon see reports of its formal opening (Oct. 14-16), at which Dr. Ray Palmer represented Yale and the American independents. The report in the "Non-conformist and Independent" for Oct. 17, 1889, is especially full and accurate.]

(a) Natural Theology and Revelation.

(b) Dates of the Canonical Books of the N. T.

(c) Miracles.

(d) Prophecy.

These have each and all been improved and brought more up to date in the new Statutes, which also add a fresh subject, viz.

(e) Comparison of Christianity with other Religions, for the general study of which there are recommended Wordsworth, "The One Religion"; Hardwick, "Christ and other Masters"; Tiele, "Outlines of the History of Religions"; while special knowledge is required of *one* of the following (1) Brahmanism, (2) Buddhism, (3) Islam.

Under (5) the direct changes have been but slight.

Under (6) in (a) O. T., there is exact criticism of two books, e.g., 1. Samuel and Ezekiel 1-16, as well as a general knowledge of Palæography; (b) N. T., exact criticism of e.g., Luke 13-24 and the Johannine epistles, besides works of a general character; (c) Archæology of O. and N. T. which includes the Geography of Palestine, the History and Services of the Temple and Synagogues, the Civil government, the History of the chief religious parties, the Provincial government of the Roman Empire, so far as it affects the Gospels and the Acts.

The Revised Version of 1885 is that recognized throughout.

In closing it may be well to remind American readers that Professors are appointed by and for the University, as a whole, while in addition any of the 18 or so Colleges, its

*The Independent Divinity Hall for a post graduate course, which is however not strictly within the University, though its lectures are open to all and its men by a special arrangement attend Divinity lectures in the University.

constituent elements, may have a staff of Tutors and Lecturers primarily for its own students, though now there is practically a system of "free trade" in lectures among the various colleges.

The University Theological Professors who are also clergy of the Established church and the subjects of their lectures this year are as follows:—

Regius Prof. of Divinity, Dr. W. Ince; Studies in the Bible, Christian Doctrine.

Margaret Prof. of Divinity, Dr. C. A. Heurtley; The Creeds and Sacraments.

Regius Prof. of Ecclesiastical History, Dr. W. Bright; The Church of the First Four Councils.

Regius Prof. of Pastoral Theology, Dr. F. Paget; 1 Timothy: Hooker Bk. V.

Regius Prof. of Hebrew, Dr. S. R. Driver; subjects already given.

Dean Ireland's Prof. of Exegesis, Dr. W. Sanday; Ep. to Romans: Seminars described in Con. Rev. *ut supra*.

Oriel Prof. of Interpretation of Holy Scr., Dr. T. K. Cheyne; subjects already given.

* Reader in Ecclesiastical History, Dr. E. Hatch; Clement of Rome, Canons of Nicaea.

* Since this was written a cloud has come over the brightening sky in the removal from our midst of Dr. Hatch, a martyr to excessive strain of work. England has not his equal in his own line. Memoir in forthcoming "Expositor" for January.